

Message Text

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PAGE 01 REYKJA 00600 050926Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 AID-05 DOTE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 DOE-15
SOE-02 OES-07 /108 W
-----024714 050930Z /17

R 050852Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8369
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
COMICEDEFOR KEFLAVIK IC

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, IC
SUBJECT: LATEST MANIFESTATIONS OF LABOR UNHAPPINESS

REFS: (A) REYKJAVIK 0553, (B) REYKJAVIK 0590; (C) REYKJAVIK 0251

1. ICELANDIC LABOR, TOO WEAK TO TAKE CONCERTED ACTION AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT (REF A), IS PRESENTLY UNDERTAKING SERIES OF WORK STOPPAGES TO DEMONSTRATE UNHAPPINESS WITH GOI ECONOMIC MEASURES APPROVED IN FEBRUARY (REF C). SOME SEGMENTS OF FACTORY WORKERS UNION ARE ON ONE-DAY STRIKE MAY 3, OTHERS WILL BE OFF MAY 5, AND STILL OTHERS MAY 8. MEANWHILE ICELANDIC GENERAL AND TRANSPORT WORKERS FEDERATION (VMSI) HAS CALLED BAN ON OIL IMPORTS FOR TWO WEEKS BEGINNING MAY 11. VMSI EXPORT BAN (REF B) CONTINUES INTO ITS FOURTH WEEK, AND WESTFJORDS BRANCH OF ICELANDIC FEDERATION OF LABOR (IFL) THREATENING GENERAL STRIKE THROUGHOUT NORTHWEST.

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2. ALL OF THESE MEASURES ARE SYMBOLIC GESTURES TO PROTEST GOI ACTION AND HAVE HAD ONLY MINIMAL AFFECT ON ECONOMY. WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT WAREHOUSES IN REYKJAVIK ARE FILLING UP WITH FISH DESTINED FOR EXPORT, DOCKWORKERS HAVE CONTINUED TO WORK IN OTHER HARBOR POSITIONS, AND EXEMPTIONS TO EXPORT BAN HAVE BEEN GRANTED WHENEVER IT APPEARED THAT JOBS IN FREEZING PLANTS

WERE ENDANGERED. SINCE ICELAND HAS TWO MONTH OIL SUPPLY (AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT NO TANKER IS EVEN DUE DURING MAY 11-25 PERIOD), OIL IMPORTS BAN WOULD HAVE LITTLE AFFECT UNLESS IT WERE PROLONGED; FURTHER EVIDENCE OF SYMBOLIC NATURE OF GESTURE IS FACT THAT VMSI COULD HAVE HAD MORE IMPACT HAD IT STRUCK BEFORE DOCKING OF NEXT OIL TANKER DUE LATER THIS WEEK. AS FOR FACTORY WORKERS' STRIKES, TIMING AROUND HOLIDAY MAY 4 AND WEEKEND MAY 6-7 IS CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT EMPLOYEES MORE INTERESTED IN TAKING ADVANTAGE OF PLEASANT SPRING WEATHER THAN IN BRINGING INDUSTRY TO A HALT. EVEN THREATS OF STRIKES IN WESTFJORDS SEEM HOLLOW IN FACE OF TRADITIONALLY SUCCESSFUL MEDIATION THERE.

3. AS NOTED REF A, LABOR IS FRUSTRATED AND CURRENT DISTURBANCES ARE WAY OF MAKING A POLITICAL STATEMENT WITHOUT TAKING AN ECONOMIC RISK. GOI HAS NOT REACTED PUBLICLY TO ANY OF LABOR'S MOVES SINCE, CONFIDENTLY DEALING FROM A POSITION OF STENGTH, IT NEED NOT. CHRISTENSEN

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